The Self-Assertion of the German University

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

THE ASSUMPTION OF the rectorate is the commitment to the *spiritual* leadership of this institution of higher learning.[1] The following of teachers and students only awakens and strengthens through a true and common rootedness in the essence of the German university. This essence, however, only gains clarity, rank, and power if the leaders, first and foremost and at any time, are themselves led—led by the relentlessness of that spiritual mission that forces the destiny of the German people into the shape of its history.

Do we know about this spiritual mission? Whether we do or not, the question must inevitably be faced: *are* we, teachers and students of this "high" school, truly and commonly rooted in the essence of the German university? Does this essence have genuine strength to shape our existence [*Dasein*]?[2] Only if we fundamentally *will* this essence. But who would want to doubt this? The dominant characteristic of the university's essence is generally thought to be its "self-administration"; it is to be preserved. However—have we really fully considered what this claim to self-administration demands of us?

Self-administration means that we set ourselves our own task and determine the way and manner of its realization ourselves, so that in doing so we ourselves will be what we ought to be. But do we know *who we ourselves* are, this body of teachers and students of the highest school of the German people? Can

we know this at all without the most constant and unsparing *self-examination*?

Neither awareness of the present state of the university nor acquaintance with its previous history are enough to guarantee sufficient knowledge of its essence—unless we first, with clarity and severity, delimit this essence for the future, and in such self-limitation, *will* it, and in such willing, *assert* ourselves.

Self-administration can only exist when it is grounded in self-examination. Self-examination, however, can only take place in the strength of the German university's *self-assertion*. Will we carry it out? And how?

The self-assertion of the German university is the primordial, common will to its essence. We regard the German university as the "high" school that, grounded in science and by means of science, educates and disciplines the leaders and guardians of the destiny of the German people. The will to the essence of the German university is the will to science as will to the historical spiritual mission of the German people as a people that knows itself in its state [*Staat*]. *Together*, science and German destiny must come to power in the will to essence. And they will do so and *only* will do so, if we—teachers and students—*on the one hand*, expose science to its innermost necessity and, *on the other hand*, are able to stand our ground while German destiny is in its most extreme distress.

However, we will not experience the essence of science in its innermost necessity as long as we—when speaking of the "new concept of science"—only contest the self-sufficiency and lack of presuppositions of an all-too-contemporary science. Such action is merely negative. Hardly looking back beyond the past decades, it becomes a mere semblance of a true struggle for the essence of science.

If we want to grasp the essence of science, we must first face the decisive question: Should there still *be* science for us in the future, or should we let it drift toward a rapid end? It is never unconditionally necessary that science should be at all. But if there should be science and if it should be *for* us and *through* us, then under what condition can it truly exist?

Only if we again place ourselves under the power of the *beginning* of our spiritual-historical existence. This beginning is the departure, the setting out, of Greek philosophy. Here, for the first time, Western man rises up, from a base in a popular culture [*Volkstum*] and by means of his language, against the *totality of*

what is and questions and comprehends it as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it knows and wills it—or not. All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy. From it science draws the strength of its essence, assuming that it still remains at all equal to this beginning.

Here we want to regain two distinguishing properties of the original Greek essence of science for *our* existence.

An old story was told among the Greeks that Prometheus had been the first philosopher. Aeschylus has this Prometheus utter a saying that expresses the essence of knowing:

τέχνη δ'ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῶ
(Prom. 514, ed. Wil).

"Knowing, however, is far weaker than necessity." That means that all knowing about things has always already been surrendered to the predominance of destiny and fails before it.

Precisely because of this, knowing must unfold its highest defiance. Only then will the entire power of the concealedness [*Verborgenheit*] of what is rise up and knowing will really fail. In this way, what is opens itself in its unfathomable inalterability and lends knowing its truth. In this Greek saying on the creative impotence of knowledge, one all too readily hopes to find a prototype for a knowing that is based purely on itself, when actually such knowing has forgotten its own essence. This knowing is interpreted for us as the "theoretical" attitude. But what does θεωρία mean to the Greeks? It is said: pure contemplation, which only remains bound to the matter in question and all that it is and demands. This contemplative behavior is said, with reference to the Greeks, to be pursued for its own sake. But this reference is mistaken. For on the one hand, "theory" is not pursued for its own sake, but only in the passion to remain close to and under the pressure of what is. On the other, the Greeks fought precisely to comprehend and carry out this contemplative questioning as one, indeed as *the* highest, mode of human ἐνέργεια, of human "being-at-work." They were not concerned with aligning practice with theory. Rather, the reverse was true: theory was to be understood as the highest realization of genuine practice. For the Greeks, science is not a "cultural asset" but the innermost determining center of all of popular [*volklich*] and national [*staatlich*] existence. The Greeks thought science not merely a means of bringing the unconscious to consciousness, but the power that hones and encompasses all of existence.

Science is the questioning standing of one's ground in the midst of the constantly self-concealing totality of what is. This active perseverance knows about its impotence in the face of destiny.

This is the initial essence of science. But does this beginning not already lie two and half millennia behind us? Has not the progress of human actions changed science as well? Certainly! The Christian-theological interpretation of the world that followed and the later mathematical-technological thinking of the modern age have distanced science, both in time and in its concerns, from its beginning. But this does not mean that the beginning has been overcome, let alone that it has been negated. Assuming that the primordial Greek science is indeed something great, then the *beginning* of this greatness remains what is *greatest.* The essence of science could not even be emptied out or used up, as is happening today despite all the results and "international organizations," if the greatness of the beginning did not *still* endure. The beginning still *is.* It does not lie *behind us*, as something that was long ago, but stands *before* us. As what is greatest, the beginning has passed in advance over all that is to come and thus already over us as well. The beginning has invaded our future. There it stands as the distant command to us to catch up with its greatness.

Only if we resolutely submit to this distant command to regain the greatness of this beginning, only then will science become the innermost necessity of our existence. Otherwise it will remain an accident into which we fall or the dispassionate contentment of a safe occupation, serving to further a mere progress of information.

But if we submit to the distant command of the beginning, science must become the fundamental happening of our spiritual and popular [*volklich*] existence.

And if our most authentic existence itself stands before a great transformation, and if it is true what that passionate seeker of God and last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said: "God is dead"—and if we must be serious about this forsakenness of modern human beings in the midst of what is, then what is the situation of science?

Then, the initial, awed perseverance of the Greeks in the face of what is transforms itself into a completely uncovered exposure to the hidden and uncertain; that is, the questionable. Questioning is then no longer merely a preliminary step that is surmounted on the way to the answer and thus to knowing; rather, questioning itself becomes the highest form of knowing. Questioning then unfolds its

most authentic strength to unlock the essential in all things. Questioning then forces our vision to focus, with the utmost simplicity, on the inevitable.

Such questioning shatters the encapsulation of the sciences in separate specialities, brings them back from their boundless and aimless dispersal in individual fields and corners, and directly exposes science once again to the productivity and blessing of all world-shaping powers of human-historical existence, such as nature, history, language; people, custom, state; poetry, thought, faith; disease, madness, death; law, economy, technology.

If we will the essence of science understood as the *questioning, uncovered standing one's ground in the midst of the uncertainty of the totality of what is*, then *this* will to essence will create for our people its world of innermost and most extreme danger, i.e. its truly *spiritual* world. For "spirit" is not empty cleverness, nor the noncommittal play of wit, nor the boundless drift of rational dissection, let alone world reason; spirit is the primordially attuned, knowing resoluteness toward the essence of Being. And the *spiritual world* of a people is not the superstructure of a culture any more than it is an armory filled with useful information and values; it is the power that most deeply preserves the people's earth- and blood-bound strengths as the power that most deeply arouses and most profoundly shakes the people's existence. Only a spiritual world guarantees the people greatness. For it forces the constant decision between the will to greatness and the acceptance of decline to become the law for each step of the march that our people has begun into its future history.

If we will this essence of science, then the teachers of this university must really advance to the outermost post, endangered by constant uncertainty about the world. If they stand their ground there; that is to say, if a common questioning and a communally tuned saying arises from there—in essential nearness to the pressing insistence of all things—then they will gain the strength for leadership. For what is decisive in leading is not just walking ahead of others but the strength to be able to walk alone, not from obstinacy or a craving for power, but empowered by the deepest purpose and the broadest obligation. Such strength binds to what is essential, selects the best, and awakens the genuine following of those who have new courage. But we do not need to first awaken this following. German students are on the march. And *whom* they are seeking are those leaders through whom they want to elevate their own purpose so that it becomes a grounded, knowing truth,

and to place it into the clarity of interpretive and effective word and work.

Out of the resoluteness of the German students to stand their ground while German destiny is in its most extreme distress comes a will to the essence of the university. This will is a true will, provided that German students, through the new Student Law,[3] place themselves under the law of their essence and thereby first define this essence. To give oneself the law is the highest freedom. The much-lauded "academic freedom" will be expelled from the German university; for this freedom was not genuine because it was only negative. It primarily meant lack of concern, arbitrariness of intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint in what was done and left undone. The concept of the freedom of the German student is now brought back to its truth. In future, the bond and service of German students will unfold from this truth.

The first bond binds to the national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]. It obligates to help carry the burden of and to participate actively in the struggles, strivings, and skills of all the estates and members of the people. From now on, this bond will be fixed and rooted in the existence of the student by means of *Labor Service* [*Arbeitsdienst*].

The *second* bond binds to the honor and the destiny of the nation in the midst of all the other peoples. It demands the readiness, secured by knowledge and skill and tightened by discipline, to give the utmost in action. In future, this bond will encompass and penetrate the entire existence of the student as *Military Service* [*Wehrdienst*].

The *third* bond of the students binds them to the spiritual mission of the German people. This people works at its fate by opening its history to all the overwhelming world-shaping powers of human existence and by continually fighting for its spiritual world anew. Thus exposed to the most extreme questionableness of its own existence, this people wills to be a spiritual people. It demands of itself and for itself that its leaders and guardians possess the strictest clarity of the highest, broadest, and richest knowledge. Young students, who at an early age have dared to act as men and have extended their willing to the future destiny of the nation, force themselves, from the very ground of their being, to serve this knowledge. These students will no longer permit *Knowledge Service* [*Wissensdienst*] to be a dull and rushed training for a "distinguished" profession. Because the statesman and the teacher, the

doctor and the judge, the minister and the architect lead the existence of people and state, because they guard and hone it in its fundamental relations to the world-shaping powers of human being, these professions and the education for them are entrusted to Knowledge Service. Knowledge does not serve the professions but the reverse: the professions effect and administer that highest and essential knowledge of the people concerning its entire existence. But for us this knowledge is not the dispassionate taking note of essences and values as such, but the most severe endangerment of existence in the midst of the overwhelming power of what is. The very questionableness of Being forces the people to work and fight and forces it into its state [*Staat*], to which the professions belong.

The three bonds—*by* the people, *to* the destiny of the state, *in* spiritual mission—are *equally primordial* to the German essence. The three services that arise from it—Labor Service, Military Service, and Knowledge Service—are equally necessary and of equal rank.

The primordial and full essence of science, whose realization is our task, provided we submit to the distant command of the beginning of our spiritual-historical existence, is only created by knowledge about the people that actively participates and by knowledge about the state's destiny that always keeps itself prepared, both at one with knowledge about the spiritual mission.

It is *this* science that is meant when the essence of the German university is delimited as the "high" school that, grounded in science and through science, educates and disciplines the leaders and guardians of the German people.

This primordial concept of science obligates us not only to "objectivity," but, above all, to make our questioning in the midst of the historical-spiritual world of the people essential and simple. Indeed, it is only then that objectivity can truly ground itself—i.e., discover its nature and its limit.

Science, in this sense, must become the power that shapes the body of the German university. This contains a twofold task: Teachers and students, each in their own way, must become *seized* and *remain* seized by the concept of science. At the same time, however, this concept of science must intervene in and rearrange the basic forms in which the teachers and students each act in a scientific community: in the *faculties* and as *student bodies of specific departments* [*Fachschaften*].

The faculty is a faculty only if it becomes capable of spiritual

legislation, and, rooted in the essence of its science, able to shape the powers of existence that pressure *it* into the *one* spiritual world of the people.

The student body of a certain department is a student body only if it places itself in the realm of this spiritual legislation from the start and thus tears down departmental barriers and overcomes the staleness and falseness of superficial professional training.

At the moment when faculties and departmental student bodies set the essential and simple questions of their science into motion, teachers and students are already encompassed by the *same* final necessities and pressing concerns of the existence of people and state.

The unfolding of the primordial essence of science, however, demands such a degree of rigor, responsibility, and superior patience that, in comparison, the conscientious adherence to or the eager alteration of established procedures hardly matter.

But if the Greeks needed three centuries just to put the *question* of what knowledge is onto the right ground and on a secure track, *we* have no right to assume that the elucidation and unfolding of the essence of the German university will occur in the current or coming semester.

But there is *one* thing we do know from the indicated essence of science: The German university will only gain shape and power if the three services primordially coalesce to become *one* formative force. That is to say:

The teachers' will to essence must awaken to the simplicity and breadth of knowledge about the essence of science and thus grow strong. The students' will to essence must force itself to rise to the highest clarity and discipline of knowing and integrate, demanding and determining, engaged knowledge [*Mitwissenschaft*] about the people and its state into the essence of science. The two wills must confront one another, ready for *battle*. All abilities of will and thought, all strengths of the heart, and all capabilities of the body must be unfolded *through* battle, heightened *in* battle, and preserved *as* battle.

We choose the knowing battle of those who question, and we profess with *Carl von Clausewitz*:[4] "I renounce the frivolous hope of salvation by the hand of accident."

This battle community of teachers and students, however, will only recreate the German university into a place of spiritual legislation and establish in it the center of the most disciplined preparation for the highest service to the people in its state if teachers and

students arrange their existence more simply, more unsparingly, and more frugally than all the other members of their people [*Volksgenossen*]. All leading must concede its following its own strength. All following, however, bears resistance in itself. This essential opposition of leading and following must not be blurred let alone eliminated.

Battle alone keeps this opposition open and implants in the entire body of teachers and students that basic attitude that allows self-limiting self-assertion empower resolute self-examination to come to genuine self-administration.

Do we, or do we not, will the essence of the German university? It is up to us whether, and to what extent, we concern ourselves with self-examination and self-assertion, not just in passing, but starting from its foundations, or whether we—with the best of intentions—merely change old institutions and add new ones. No one will keep us from doing this.

But no one will even ask us whether we do or do not will, when the spiritual strength of the West fails and its joints crack, when this moribund semblance of a culture caves in and drags all forces into confusion and lets them suffocate in madness.

Whether this will or will not happen depends solely on whether we, as a historical-spiritual people, still and once again will ourselves—or whether we no longer will ourselves. Each individual *participates* in this decision even when, and especially when, he evades it.

But we do will that our people fulfill its historical mission.

We do will ourselves. For the young and the youngest strength of the people, which is already reaching beyond us, *has* already *decided* the matter.

But we will only fully understand the magnificence and greatness of this new departure when we carry within us that profound and far-reaching thoughtfulness that gave ancient Greek wisdom the saying:

> τὰ . . . μεγάλα πάυτα ἐπισφαλῆ . . .
> [All that is great stands in the storm . . .]
> (Plato, *Republic*, 497 d. 9).

The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

IN APRIL 1933, I was unanimously elected rector by the plenum of the university. My predecessor, von Möllendorff,[1] had been forced to resign, on the instructions of the Minister [of Culture and Education in Baden, Otto Wacker], after a brief term in office. Von Möllendorff himself, with whom I spoke about the succession in detail numerous times, wanted me to assume the rectorate. Similarly, the man who had been rector before him, Sauer,[2] tried to persuade me to assume the office in the interest of the university. As late as the morning of the election day, I hesitated and wanted to withdraw my candidacy. I had no contact to the influential governmental and [National Socialist German Workers'] Party agencies, was neither a member of the Party, nor had I been politically active in any way. Thus it was uncertain whether my conception of necessity and task would be heard in places where political power was concentrated. But it was just as uncertain to what extent the university would go along with it, of its own accord, and find and shape its own essence in a more primordial manner. I had already publicly presented this task in my inaugural lecture delivered in the summer of 1929.

In the introductory sentences of the inaugural lecture, "What Is Metaphysics?" the following is stated: "*We* question, *here* and *now*, for *ourselves*. Our *existence* [*Dasein*]—as members of a community of scientists, teachers, and students—is determined by *science*. What essential thing is happening to us at the foundation of our

existence, assuming science has become our *passion*? The areas of the sciences lie far apart. The ways they treat their subject matter are fundamentally different. This disintegrated multiplicity of the disciplines is only held together today by the technical organization of the universities and faculties and only retains some meaning because of the practical purposes set for the departments. However, the roots of the sciences in their essential ground have died."[3] By the year 1933 this speech had already been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, and Japanese.

Everyone was in a position to know what I thought about the German university and what I considered its most urgent concern. It was to renew itself starting from its essential ground, which is precisely the essential ground of the sciences, that is to say from the essence of truth itself; and, instead of persisting in a technical organizational-institutional pseudo-unity, it was to regain the primordial vital unity of those who question and those who know.

In 1930 I spoke on the essence of truth. I even repeated the lecture in a number of German towns until 1932, and it was known through duplicated transcripts. The lecture was not published until 1943.[4] At the time I gave that lecture, I also gave a two-hour lecture course on the Greek concept of truth, approaching the topic with an interpretation of the Platonic allegory of the cave. This lecture course was repeated during my rectorate in the winter semester 1933/34 and was supplemented by a very well-attended seminar on "People [*Volk*] and Science." The interpretation of the allegory of the cave was published in 1942 in the *Jahrbuch für geistige Überlieferung II* under the title "*Plato's Doctrine of Truth*" ["*Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*"].[5] The Party officially prohibited mention and review of this essay; the production of offprints and their distribution by the book trade were similarly prohibited.

What made me hesitate to assume the rectorate up to the very last day was the knowledge that with what I intended I would necessarily run into a twofold conflict with both the new and the old. The new had meanwhile appeared in the form of political science,[6] the idea of which is based on a falsification of the essence of truth. The old was the endeavor to remain in one's own department, to support its progress and utilize this progress in classes, to reject all reflection on the essential foundations as abstract and philosophical, or at most to admit it as superficial decoration, but not to engage in it as reflection and to think and belong to this university *from the base of this engagement.*

Thus there was a danger that my attempt would be fought

against, and made impossible, in the same way by both the new and the old, opposed as they were to one another. What I admittedly did *not yet* see and could not expect when I assumed the rectorate, is what happened in the course of the first semester: that the old and the new finally joined, at one in their desire to paralyze my efforts and to finally eliminate me.

Despite this double threat to my intention to found the essence of the university in a primordial manner, I finally decided to assume the office, moved by the urging of many colleagues at the university, especially of the dismissed rector von Möllendorff and of his predecessor and vice-rector at the time, Sauer. I was especially moved by the possibility, pointed out by Canon Sauer, that, should I refuse, the university might be faced with a rector chosen by outsiders.

On the whole, a threefold consideration determined me to assume the rectorate:

1. At the time, I saw in the movement that had come to power the possibility of an inner self-collection and of a renewal of the people, and a path toward the discovery of its historical-Western purpose. I believed that the university, renewing itself, might also be called to significantly participate in the inner self-collection of the people.
2. For that reason, I saw the rectorate as a possibility to lead all capable forces—regardless of party membership and party doctrine—toward this process of reflection and renewal, and to strengthen and secure the influence of these forces.
3. In this manner I hoped to oppose the advance of unsuited persons and the threatening hegemony of Party apparatus and Party doctrine.

It is a fact that at that time much that was inferior and incapable, much that was selfish and envious, already carried on its terrible business. But in view of the total situation of our people, I thought that this was precisely one more reason to bring the capable forces and the essential aims into play. It was certainly more comfortable to stay on the side, to turn up one's nose at the "impossible people," and to praise what had been without a glance at the historical situation of the Western world. A reference might suggest how I saw the historical situation even at that time. Ernst Jünger's essay on "Total Mobilization" ["*Die totale Mobilmachung*"] was published in 1930; in this essay the basic features of his book *The Worker* [*Der Arbeiter*], which was published in 1932, announced

themselves.[7] With my assistant Brock,[8] I discussed these writings in a small circle and attempted to show how they express an essential understanding of Nietzsche's metaphysics, insofar as the history and present of the Western world are seen and foreseen within the horizon of this metaphysics. Using these writings and, still more essentially, their foundations, as a base for our thoughts we were able to think what was coming, that is to say, we attempted to face it in our confrontation with it. Many others also read these writings at the time; but they laid them aside along with many other interesting things they read and did not comprehend their far-reaching implications. In the winter of 1939/40, I once again discussed parts of Jünger's book *The Worker* with a circle of colleagues; I learned that these ideas still seemed strange and disconcerting even then, until they were verified by "the facts." What Ernst Jünger means by his idea of the rule and figure of the worker and what he sees in the light of this idea is the universal rule of the will to power within planetary history. Today everything is a part of this reality, whether it is called communism, or fascism, or world democracy.

From the vantage point of this reality of the will to power, I saw even then what *is*. This reality of the will to power can be expressed, with Nietzsche, in the proposition "God is dead." Essential reasons led me to cite this proposition in my rectorial address. This proposition has nothing to do with the assertion of ordinary atheism. It means: the supersensible world, especially the world of the Christian God, has lost its effective force in history. (See my lecture, 1943, on Nietzsche's word "God is dead."[9]) If things had been different, would the First World War have been possible? And especially, if things had been different, would the Second World War have become possible?

Was there not, then, enough reason and essential distress to think in primordial reflection toward an overcoming of the metaphysics of the will to power, and that means to begin a confrontation with Western thinking by returning to its beginning? Was there not, then, enough reason and essential distress to attempt, for the sake of this reflection on the spirit of the Western world, to awaken and lead into battle, here in Germany, that place that was considered the seat of the cultivation of knowledge and insight—the German university?

Certainly, in the face of the course of history, an argument that begins with "What would have happened, if . . . and if not . . ." is

always risky. Yet the question may still be posed: What would have happened and what would have been prevented, if, around 1933, all capable forces had set out, in secret cohesion, to slowly purify and moderate the "movement" that had come to power?

Certainly—it is always a presumption when human beings calculate the guilt of other human beings or charge them with it. But if one is indeed looking for those who are guilty and is judging them by their guilt, is there not also a guilt incurred by failing to do what is essential? Those who were so prophetically gifted then that they foresaw what was to come (I was not so wise), why did they wait almost ten years to oppose the threatening disaster? Why did not those who thought they knew it, why did precisely they not set out to direct everything, starting from its foundations, toward the good in 1933?

Certainly it would have been difficult to gather all capable forces; difficult, too, to slowly influence the movement in its entirety and its position of power, but not more difficult than to bear the burden that we were consequently forced to bear.

With the assumption of the rectorate, I had risked the attempt to save and to purify and to strengthen what was positive.

It was never my intention to merely put Party doctrines into effect and to act in accordance with the "idea" of a "political science." But I was equally unwilling to defend only what had been previously established and, by merely mediating and balancing, to level everything and to keep it in mediocrity. My clear conviction was that the things that were at stake were too essential, towering far above all that concerned the university.

However, it was also clear to me that first of all the positive possibilities that I then saw in the movement had to be emphasized and affirmed in order to prepare for a gathering of all capable forces that would be based not only on facts but also on what mattered. Immediate and mere opposition would neither have corresponded to my conviction at the time (which was never blind faith in the Party) nor would it have been prudent.

To characterize my basic attitude while I was rector, let the following be noted:

1. I was never asked by any Party agency for any kind of political advice; I also never sought such participation.
2. I never maintained any other personal or political relations to Party functionaries in any other way, either.

The intention and attitude of my rectorate are expressed in the rectorial address of May 1933. However, in this case as with every spoken word, everything depends on the interpretation and on the readiness to enter into what is essential and to get it into view at all. The heart of the rectorial address, which is already apparent by the space given it, is the exposition of the essence of knowing and science; the university is to be grounded on that essence, and on that ground it is to assert itself in its essence as German university. Knowledge Service is named in third place after Labor Service and Military Service, not because it is subordinated to them, but because knowing is what is authentic and highest, that unto which the essence of the university and therefore reflection gathers itself. As far as Labor Service, which is mentioned in second place, goes: I may be permitted to remind the reader that this "service" grew out of, and was shaped by, the plight of the times and the will of the young long before 1933. I did not name Military Service in either a militaristic or an aggressive sense but understood it as defense in self-defense.

The heart of the address serves the explanation of the essence of knowing, science, and profession that is based on a training in science. Four major points should be singled out with respect to content:

1. The grounding of the sciences in the experience of the essential area of their subject matter.
2. The essence of truth as the letting be of what is, as it is.
3. Preservation of the tradition of the beginning of Western knowledge in the Greek world. (See my two-hour lecture course given in the summer semester 1932: "The Beginning of Western Philosophy.")
4. In keeping with this, the responsibility of the Western world.

In all this lies the decisive rejection of the idea of "political science," which was announced by the National Socialists as a cruder doctrine of Nietzsche's understanding of the essence of truth and knowledge. But beyond this, the rectorial address clearly rejects the idea of "political science."

The attitude of reflection and questioning is oriented toward "battle." But what does *battle* mean in the address? If what is essential in this reflection returns to the Greek ἐπιστήμη and that means to ἀλήθεια, then one may conjecture that the essence of battle is also not conceived arbitrarily. Battle is thought in the

sense of Heraclitus, fragment 53. But to understand this often-cited and equally often misunderstood saying, two things should first be taken into consideration, as I have said often enough in my lectures and seminars:

1. The word πόλεμος, with which the fragment begins, does not mean "war" but what is meant by the word ἔρις, which Heraclitus uses in the same sense. But that means "strife"—not strife as discord and squabbling and mere disagreement and certainly not as the use of violence and beating down the opponent but as confrontation[10] in which the essence of those who confront one another exposes itself to the other and thus shows itself and comes to appearance, and that means in a Greek way: into what is unconcealed and true. Because battle is reciprocal recognition that exposes itself to what is essential, the address, which orients this questioning and reflecting toward "battle," continually speaks of "being exposed." That what is said here lies in the direction of the Heraclitan saying is very clearly shown by the saying itself. One must only take a second point into consideration.
2. Not only must we not think πόλεμοσ as war and, furthermore, not use the supposedly Heraclitan proposition "War is the father of all things" to proclaim war and combat as the highest principle of all being and to philosophically justify the warlike. Above all and at the same time, we must take into consideration that Heraclitus' saying—cited in the usual manner—falsifies everything, because the saying in its entirety is thus suppressed and with it what is essential. The complete saying goes: "Although confrontation sows all things, it is also (and above all) of all things that which is highest that which preserves, and this is because it lets some show themselves as gods, the others, however, as humans, because it lets some step into the open as bondsmen, but the others as free beings."

The essence of πόλεμος lies in δεικνύναι, to show, and in ποιεῖν, to produce [*her-stellen*], as the Greeks say, make-it-stand-out [*hervorstellen*] in open view. That is the essence of *battle* as it is philosophically thought, and what is said in the address is only thought philosophically.

This confrontational reflection on the essential realm of science must take place in each science or it will remain science [*Wissenschaft*] without knowing [*Wissen*]. From such reflection on the

totality of the sciences, the university will bring itself, through itself, to its essential ground, which is only accessible to the knowing that it cultivates. That is why its essence cannot be determined from some other place, by "politics" or by some other purpose established for it.

In accordance with this fundamental conception and fundamental attitude, the address bears the title "The Self-Assertion of the German University." Only very few clearly understood what this title alone meant in the year 1933, because only a few of those whom it concerned took the trouble to clearly think through what was said, without bias and without the matter having been obscured by idle talk about it.

Admittedly, one could deal with it in another way. One could excuse oneself from reflection and hold onto the seemingly obvious thought that, shortly after National Socialism seized power, a newly elected rector gives an address on the university, an address which "represents" National Socialism—that is to say, proclaims the idea of "political science," which, crudely understood, says "True is what is good for the people." From this one concludes, and rightly so, that this betrays the essence of the German university in its very core and actively contributes to its destruction; for this reason, the title should be "The Self-Decapitation of the German University."[11] One *could* proceed in this way, if one is sufficiently ignorant and incapable of reflection, if one is lazy enough and ready to escape into idle talk, if one only summons up a sufficient degree of malevolence.

One *could* proceed in such an irresponsible manner when interpreting the address; but then one should not pose as someone who knows himself responsible for the spirit and the welfare of the German university. For to think so superficially and to spend one's days with such superficial chatter corresponds perhaps to political methods, but contradicts the innermost spirit of the objectivity of thinking, the spirit one is pretending to have to save.

The address was not understood by those whom it concerned; neither was its content understood, nor was it understood that it states what it was that guided me during my term in office in distinguishing between what was essential and what was less essential and merely external.

Although the address, and with it my attitude, was grasped even less by the Party and the relevant agencies, it was "understood" inasmuch as one immediately sensed the opposition in it. Follow-

ing the inaugural banquet in the [Hotel] Kopf, Minister Wacker told me his opinion of the address on the very same day he had heard it:

1. That this was a kind of "private National Socialism," which circumvented the perspectives of the Party program.
2. Most importantly, that the whole address had not been based on the concept of race.
3. That he could not accept the rejection of the idea of "political science," even if he were willing to admit that this idea had not yet been given sufficient foundation.

This opinion of the Minister mattered inasmuch as it was immediately announced to Party friends, to Scheel,[12] then the Gau student leader, and to Dr. Stein, lecturer in medicine, and to Krieck[13] in Frankfurt. Incidentally, these three dominated the Ministry of Culture in Karlsruhe from the start. Fehrle,[14] the Ministerial Counselor responsible for the universities, who was actually harmless and good-natured, was completely under their control.

When I visited the ministry shortly after the inaugural celebration, I was given to understand the following: (1) That in future the presence of the archbishop at such celebrations was not welcome; (2) that the speech I gave at the banquet following the inaugural celebration was inappropriate in that I had superfluously singled out my colleague Sauer from the theological faculty and had emphasized how much I owed him for my own academic education.

The fact that such issues were raised in the ministry was not only characteristic of its standpoint as a whole, but it also showed that one was not at all willing to even consider what I, against a background of squabbling and disagreement, was striving to accomplish for the sake of the inner renewal of the university.

By then I had already been in office for a few weeks. My first official action was, on the second day of my rectorate, to prohibit the posting of the "Jewish notice"[15] in any of the rooms belonging to the university. The notice had already been posted in all German universities. I told the student leader that as long as I was rector, this notice would have no place in the university. Thereupon he, with his two companions, left with the comment that he would report this prohibition to the Reich student leadership. About eight days later, I received a telephone call from a Dr. Baumann, SA Group Leader, from the SA Office of Higher Education of the Supreme SA Leadership. He demanded that the "Jewish notice" be

posted. If I refused, I should expect to be removed from office or even that the university might be closed. I continued to refuse. Minister Wacker declared that he could do nothing in opposition to the SA, which then played a role that was later taken over by the SS.

These events were only the first signs of a state of affairs that became more and more apparent during the course of my year as rector: The most diverse groups with political power or common interests intervened in the university with their claims and demands; the ministry often played a minor role and was also busy trying to secure an autonomy against Berlin. Struggles for power were going on everywhere; the actors in these struggles took an interest in the university only to the extent that it, as an institution, as the body of students and teachers, was a factor that entered into the power equation. In addition, the professional associations of doctors, judges, and teachers announced their political claims and demanded the removal of professors who seemed troublesome and suspicious to them.

This atmosphere of confusion, which dominated everything, offered me no possibility to cultivate or even call attention to those efforts that were my sole concern and that had moved me to assume the rectorate: the reflection on the ethos that should govern knowing and the essence of teaching. The summer semester went by and was wasted with the discussion of personnel and institutional questions.

The only productive thing, although productive only in a negative sense, was that I was able to prevent injustices and damages to the university and to colleagues during the "Cleaning-up operation" [*Säuberungsaktion*; a purge], which often threatened to exceed its goals and limits.

The achievements of this merely preventive work did not call themselves to public attention, and it was also unnecessary that colleagues should find out about them. Respected and meritorious colleagues in the faculties of law, medicine, and natural science would be amazed if they knew what had been intended for them then.

During my first weeks in office, it was called to my attention that the minister thought it important that the rectors belong to the Party. One day Dr. Kerber, the county leader at the time, the deputy county leader, and a third member of the county leadership visited me at my office to invite me to join the Party. Only in the interest of the university, which played no role in the play for political power, did I, who had never belonged to any political party, accept the

invitation. But I only accepted it on the expressly acknowledged condition that I would never, not as an individual, let alone in my capacity as rector, take over a Party office or engage in any Party activity. I stuck to this condition, which was not difficult, because after my resignation as rector in the spring of 1934 (see below), I was considered politically unreliable and was surveilled more and more with each passing year.

My joining of the Party remained simply a matter of form insofar as the Party leadership had no intention of consulting me in discussions of questions pertaining to the university, culture, and education. During the entire time of my rectorate, I never participated in any deliberation or discussion, let alone in the decision-making, of the Party leadership and of the various Party organs. The university remained suspect, but at the same time it was used for purposes of cultural propaganda.

With every passing day I became steadily more occupied with things that, given my real intention, I had to consider unimportant. I was not only uninterested in the formal execution of such empty official business, but at the same time I was inexperienced, since up to that point I had refused every academic office and thus was a novice. The unfortunate circumstance that the head of the university's administrative office had also only been in office for a short time and was similarly inexperienced in university affairs made things worse. Therefore quite a few things happened that were inadequate, incorrect, and careless. This, it seems, exclusively occupied my colleagues. The rectorial address was a waste of breath and was forgotten the day after the inaugural celebration. During my rectorate, not one of my colleagues discussed any aspects of the address with me. They moved in the tracks of faculty politics that had been worn out for decades.

All this confusion and the predominance of the inessential that arose with it would have been bearable if two dangers for the university had not announced themselves more and more plainly in the course of the summer semester 1933.

On the occasion of a lecture I gave at the University of Heidelberg on the essence of science, I heard from Dr. Stein and Scheel about plans to replace the present holders of several chairs at the University of Freiburg. The university was to be infiltrated with reliable Party members, and this was to make it possible to appoint Party members, especially to the deanships. It was claimed that in making such appointments what mattered, at least for the time being, was not so much an individual's significance as a scholar or his

teaching ability, but his political reliability and activistic effectiveness. These remarks and plans showed once again that Krieck's influence was spreading from Frankfurt and growing stronger in Heidelberg and Karlsruhe. In Karlsruhe I was given to understand that it was unacceptable to leave the present deans in their offices. The faculties needed a National Socialist leadership. I thus faced the task of acting in a way that would forestall this threat to the genuine essence of the university.

The second danger that threatened was an external one, as became apparent at the conference of rectors held during the summer semester in Erfurt. It consisted of efforts to let the entire teaching activity of the faculties be determined by the medical, legal, and teaching professions and by their claims and needs and thus to split up the university once and for all into professional schools. Not only the inner unity of the university was threatened by this, but also the basic mode of academic training, which is what I was trying to save by means of a renewal and for whose sake alone I had assumed the rectorate.

I tried to confront the dangers threatening from Heidelberg and from the tendency toward professional schools by proposing a change in the university's constitution. This change was to have made it possible to make decanal appointments in such a way that the essence of the faculties and the unity of the university could be saved. The motive for this change in constitution was not at all revolutionary fervor and eagerness for innovation but the insight into the dangers named above, which were, in view of the distribution and nature of political power, by no means merely imagined.

Within the university, where one stared more and more one-sidedly at what had been, this change in constitution was only considered from an institutional and legal point of view. Similarly, the new decanal appointments were only judged from the point of view of personal favors or slights.

For the winter semester 1933/34, I appointed colleagues as deans who had, not only in my personal opinion but also in the general judgment of the scholarly world, names in their fields and who, at the same time, guaranteed that each in his own way would place the spirit of science at the center of his work within the faculty. None of the deans was a member of the Party. The influence of Party functionaries was eliminated. There was hope that a tradition of scientific spirit would be preserved and revived in the faculties.

But this is not what happened. All hopes were disappointed. Every effort on behalf of what really mattered was in vain.

The Todtnauberg camp became a strange omen for the winter semester 1933/34. The camp was to have prepared teachers and students for work during the actual semester and to have clarified my understanding of the essence of science and of scientific work and, at the same time, to have presented it for consideration and discussion.

The selection of the participants in this camp was *not* made according to Party membership and National Socialist engagement. After the plan for the camp had become known in Karlsruhe, an insistent request also to be allowed to send participants soon arrived from Heidelberg. Heidelberg communicated with Kiel in a similar vein.

In a talk about university and science, I attempted to clarify the core section of the rectorial address and, in consideration of the dangers mentioned above, to present the task of the university more forcefully. Productive discussions in individual groups were the immediate result, discussions on knowledge and science, knowledge and faith, faith and Weltanschauung. On the morning of the second day, Gau student leader Scheel and Dr. Stein suddenly appeared unannounced by car and had an animated discussion with the camp participants from Heidelberg. Their function gradually became apparent. Dr. Stein asked to be permitted to give a talk. He spoke on race and the principle of race. The camp participants listened to the talk but did not discuss it further. The Heidelberg group had the mission to sabotage the camp. But it was not really the camp that was at issue, it was the University of Freiburg, whose faculties were not to be led by Party members. Unpleasant occurrences, some of them painful, followed. I had to swallow them, however, if I did not want to let the entire coming winter semester fail before it had even begun. Perhaps it would have been more correct to have resigned from office at that time. But at that point I still had not reckoned with what would soon become apparent: the increasing opposition from both the minister and the group in Heidelberg that controlled him and from colleagues.

Although the minister agreed formally with the new decanal appointments, he still thought it strange that not only were no Party members appointed but also that I had dared to appoint as dean of the medical school exactly the man the minister had dismissed as rector half a year earlier because he was unacceptable. Furthermore, the ministry expressed, with increasing clarity, the desire that the idea of "political science" be taken far more seriously at the University of Freiburg than had previously been the case.

It was striking that in the course of the winter semester it was suggested to me numerous times by members of the medical and law schools that I appoint new deans and replace our colleagues von Möllendorff and Wolf.[16] I attributed these wishes to squabbling and rivalries within the two faculties and took no further notice of them. Until, late in the winter toward the end of the semester 1933/34, I was asked to come to Karlsruhe, where Ministerial Counselor Fehrle informed me, in the presence of Gau student leader Scheel, that the minister wanted me to relieve these deans, von Möllendorff and Wolf, of their posts.

I immediately declared that I would do so under no circumstances and that I could not justify such a change of appointments either personally or objectively. If the minister were to insist on his request, I would have no choice but to resign from office under protest against this imposition. Herr Fehrle then said to me that the law school also wanted a new decanal appointment as far as colleague Wolf was concerned. I thereupon declared that I was resigning from office and asked for a meeting with the minister. During my declaration, Gau student leader Scheel had a grin on his face. In this way one had achieved what one wanted. It had become unambiguously clear that circles at the university that were incensed by anything that looked like National Socialism did not hesitate to conspire with the ministry and the group that controlled it in order to push me out of office.

In my meeting with the minister, who immediately accepted my resignation, it became clear that there was a rift between the National Socialist conception of the university and of science and my own, a rift that could not be bridged. The minister explained that he did not want this opposition, which presumably was based on the incompatability of my philosophy with the National Socialist Weltanschauung, to become known to the public as a conflict between the University of Freiburg and the ministry. I responded that I could have no interest in that, if only because the university was agreeing with the ministry and I did not want to became a topic for public discussion because of a conflict. The minister replied that, after I had resigned from the rectorate without attracting any attention, I would be free to act as I thought necessary.

And I did act in that I refused to take part in the ceremonial handing over of the rectorate as the departing rector and to give my report, as was the tradition. This refusal was understood at the

university, and I was not, of course, further consulted as the departing rector, as was the custom, before and since. I did not expect anything of the sort.

After April 1934, I lived outside the university inasmuch as I no longer concerned myself with "what went on," and instead tried, to the best of my ability, to carry out only what was absolutely necessary in my teaching obligations. But in the following years even teaching was more of a conversation of essential thinking with itself. Perhaps it touched and awakened people here and there, but it did not shape itself into a developing structure of a definite conduct, which might in turn have given rise to something primordial.

The case of the rectorate 1933/34, unimportant as it is in itself, is probably a sign of the metaphysical state of the essence of science, a science that can no longer be determined by attempts at renewal and whose essential transformation into pure technology[17] can no longer be checked. This I only recognized in the following years (see "The Foundation of the Modern World View Through Metaphysics").[18] The rectorate was an attempt to see something in the movement that had come to power, beyond all its failings and crudeness, that was much more far-reaching and that could perhaps one day bring a concentration on the Germans' Western historical essence. It will in no way be denied that at the time I believed in such possibilities and for that reason renounced the actual vocation of thinking in favor of being effective in an official capacity. In no way will what was caused by my own inadequacy in office be played down. But these points of view do not capture what is essential and what moved me to accept the rectorate. The various assessments of this rectorate, made within the boundaries of the usual academic business, may be correct and justified, but they never capture what is essential. And today there is even less of a possibility than there was then to open blinded eyes to the horizon of what is essential.

What is essential is that we are in the midst of the consummation of nihilism, that God is "dead," and every time-space for the godhead is covered. The surmounting of nihilism nevertheless announces itself in German poetic thinking and singing.[19] The Germans, admittedly, still have the least understanding of this poetry, because they are striving to adapt themselves to the standards of the nihilism that surrounds them and thus to misjudge the essence of a historical self-assertion.

The Time after the Rectorate

Let the following be listed for those, and only for those, who take pleasure in fixedly staring at what were, in their judgment, the mistakes of my rectorate. Taken by itself, the following is as unimportant as the unproductive rummaging through past attempts and measures, which are, within the context of the entire movement of the planetary will to power, so insignificant they cannot even be called tiny.

The possible consequences of my resignation from office in the spring of 1934 were clear to me; after 30 June of the same year,[20] they were completely clear to me. Anyone who assumed an office in the leadership of the university after that was in a position to know very clearly with whom he was getting himself involved.

How my rectorate was then judged by the Party and the ministry, by the teachers and students is set down in a statement that was circulated by the press when my successor assumed office. It said that this successor was the first National Socialist rector of the University of Freiburg, a man who, as a veteran, guaranteed a fighting-soldierly spirit and its propagation at the university.

Suspicions, which at times degenerated into rudeness, began to be voiced against me. A reference to volumes of E. Krieck's journal *Volk im Werden*, which was first published at that time, is enough proof. Hardly an issue of this journal appeared in which open or seemingly unaware polemics did not disparage my philosophy. Because I never, until today, took note of these carryings on and absolutely never got involved in a refutation, the rage of those who were so pathetic that I had never attacked them steadily increased. A. Bäumler[21] went into the same business of voicing suspicions, although in a somewhat different form, in his journal of education, which he published on behalf of Rosenberg's office. The Hitler Youth's journal, *Wille und Macht*, served as a preview. My rectorial address, which had been published, became a popular target for polemics in the teachers' camps. (Verified by H. G. Gadamer, Gerh. Krüger, W. Bröcker.[22])

Even my lectures, which I gave rarely enough and in purely academic spheres, were attacked very rudely every time by the local Party newspaper in a disgusting manner and, every time, the university leadership only roused itself with difficulty to intervene in these doings. The following lectures were given: 1935, "The Origin of the Work of Art";[23] 1938, "The Foundation of the Modern

World View through Metaphysics"; 1941, "Hölderlin's Feast-Day Hymn";[24] and 1943, "Hölderlin's Memorial Celebration".[25]

This hounding, which also extended to my lecture courses, gradually had its intended effect. In the summer semester 1937, a Dr. Hancke from Berlin, very gifted and interested, appeared in a seminar and worked with me. He soon confessed to me that he could no longer conceal from me that he was working for Dr. Scheel, who was then the head of the South-West Section of the SD [*Sicherheitsdienst*; Security Service]. Dr. Scheel had called to his attention that my rectorate had been the real reason for the *non*-National Socialist appearance and the lukewarm attitude of the University of Freiburg. I do not want to count this as a merit. I only mention it to suggest that the opposition that had begun in 1933 had continued and grown stronger.

The same Dr. Hancke also told me that the SD thought I was collaborating with the Jesuits. It is true that members of Catholic orders (especially Jesuits and Franciscans from the Freiburg House) attended my lectures and seminars up until the very end. These gentlemen had the opportunity to participate in and benefit from my seminars just like other students. For a number of semesters, the Jesuit Fathers Prof. Lotz, Rahner, and Huidobro were members of my advanced seminar; they were often in our house. One only has to read their writings to recognize the influence of my thinking; this influence is, furthermore, not denied.[26]

Later, too, the Gestapo's inquiries of me concerned only Catholic members of my seminar: Father Schumacher, Dr. Guggenberger, Dr. Bollinger (in connection with the Scholl student action[27] in Munich; they were looking for a source of that action in Freiburg and searched for it in my lectures).

Even before that time, after my resignation from office, there were complaints that I allowed former students (non-Aryans) to attend my lectures.

Furthermore, it is well known that my three most capable students (Gadamer, G. Krüger, and Bröcker), all three well above the average of the new generation in philosophy at the time, were kept back for years because they were Heidegger students. They were only appointed to professorships when it became impossible not to acknowledge their qualifications and the scandal became apparent.

After 1938 it was forbidden to mention my name in newspapers and journals and to review my writings, insofar as they could still appear in new editions. Finally the publication of new editions of

Being and Time and the book on Kant was not allowed, although the publishers had the necessary paper.

Despite the complete silence within the country, attempts were made to use my name abroad for purposes of cultural propaganda and to get me to give lectures. I turned down all such lecture trips to Spain, Portugal, Italy, Hungary, and Romania; I also never participated in the lectures the faculty held in France for the armed forces.

The following facts may speak for the ways in which my philosophical work was judged and attempts were made to eliminate it:

1. At the International Congress of Philosophy in Prague in 1935, I neither belonged to the German delegation nor was I even invited to participate.
2. I was to have been excluded from the Descartes Congress in Paris in 1937 in the same way. This action against me seemed so strange to those in Paris that Prof. Brèhier from the Sorbonne asked me, on behalf of the executive committee, why I did not belong to the German delegation; the Congress wanted to invite me on its own to give a lecture. I replied that they should inquire at the Reich Ministry of Education in Berlin about this case. After a while I received an invitation from Berlin to join the delegation. The whole matter was handled in such a way that it became impossible for me to go to Paris with the German delegation.

During the war a publication of accounts of the humanities in Germany was being prepared. Nic. Hartmann[28] was in charge of the section "Systematic Philosophy." A three-day conference was held in Berlin to plan this undertaking. All professors of philosophy were invited except for Jaspers and myself. We were of no use because an attack on "existential philosophy" was being planned in connection with this publication, which was indeed later carried out.[29]

In this case, too, as earlier during the rectorate, my opponents showed a strange willingness to ally themselves, despite the oppositions that divided them, against everything by which they felt spiritually threatened and put into question.

But these events, too, are only a fleeting appearance on the waves of a movement of our history, whose dimensions the Germans still do not suspect, even after the catastrophe has descended upon them.